

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

First Meeting
September 20-21, 1971

Summary of Proceedings

There were present:

Members of the Commission: Messrs. Aines, Baker, Becker, Burkhardt, Cusdra, Dunlap, Kemeny, Lerner, Mrs. Moore, Mr. Mumford, Miss Scott, and Messrs. Velde and Zipf.
(Mr. Goland did not attend and Mr. Baker was present only for the first day's sessions.
Mr. John Lorenz, Deputy Librarian of Congress, substituted for Mr. Mumford from time to time.)

Staff: Mrs. Reszatar; Miss Bowman, Mr. Burkhardt's secretary.

Guests: As listed in the full proceedings.

At the introductory meeting on September 20 the members of the Commission and the guests introduced themselves. Congressman Brademas spoke of the establishment of the Commission as affirmation of the commitment of members of Congress to the support of libraries and information science, and he assured the members that they have friends in both the House and the Senate in both parties who will be their advocates and champions.

The Chairman stressed the independent and permanent nature of the Commission, which is not connected with any other federal agency, except that the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare is directed to provide it with administrative services.

He proposed the following agenda for the meeting:

1. Review of the legislation that established the Commission.
2. Budget for 1972.
3. Budget for 1973.
4. Appointment of an Executive Director.
5. Consideration of general program areas, including review of the recommendations of the National Advisory Commission on Libraries.

6. Consideration of how the Commission should do its work. Should it be a catalyst, an initiator, and a commissioner of works and a suggester of ideas and recommendations? Or should it ever attempt to do its own studies, with its own staff? To what extent should there be an international context to the Commission's work?
7. What special studies or what tasks should be started on immediately?
8. Housekeeping arrangements.

The Act which established the Commission, which was described as a small piece of legislation with tremendous possibilities and scope, was reviewed.

(When the requirement for a report to the President and the Congress not later than January 31 of each year was mentioned, Mr. Lamkin, Associate Commissioner of Education, noted that January would be the wrong time for an NCLIS report which had budgetary implications. Specifically, he said that if the Commission wished to influence Office of Education funding levels, this should be known to OE in time for inclusion in a budget to be submitted by September 30.)

No one present knew whether the Commission's budget request should be submitted by HEW or whether it should go in independently, and it was agreed that this matter should be discussed with the Office of Management and Budget.

The members read the legislation to mean that the Commission is clearly not an action agency, that its primary product will be plans and advice, and that any research it undertakes should be in the service of developing plans and advice. They thought the Commission should have only a small staff, and that the Commission itself should have an active working role. At least in the early days they wanted it to meet fairly frequently.

The Commission then turned to a review of the recommendations that had been made by the National Advisory Commission on Libraries--the first of which had been implemented by the creation of the Commission.

In its second recommendation, the Advisory Commission advocated that the Library of Congress ought to be designated the national library of the United States, for which a Board of Advisers would be appointed. In the discussion of this recommendation it was noted that Congress has permitted LC to perform many functions that are typical or characteristic of a national library and has been generous in its support, but doubt was

expressed that the Joint Congressional Committee on the Library would look with favor on a Board of Advisers for LC or would want to change its name. When Mr. Mumford said that providing the services to the whole Library community which the Advisory Commission had favored would be staggering in cost, space, and staff, Mr. Kemeny insisted that the cost ought to be saved several times over by the individual libraries. It was agreed that these matters would be of continuing interest to the Commission.

The Advisory Commission's third recommendation had been the establishment of a Federal Institute of Library and Information Science as a principal center for basic and applied research in all relevant areas. The discussion revealed conflicting views on the relative desirability of centralization versus diversity or pluralism in research and development efforts, and a lack of clarity about what the desirable goals of the institute that had been recommended would be. It appeared that the Commission would want to return to consideration of this subject, and the Chairman suggested that this might be an area on which it should commission a study.

The next recommendation had to do with the place of library programs in the organization of the Office of Education. It was noted that the present Bureau of Libraries and Educational Technology gives library concerns the best location they have ever had, but that another reorganization may be in the offing. The Commission expected to hear more about this at a later date.

The fifth recommendation dealt with the provision of support for state libraries. Mrs. Moore spoke about this and urged that it be one of the principal objectives of the Commission. State library agencies are not strong enough, she said, in most states to serve effectively--needing more money and better staff, and more active programs. It was suggested that the Commission might develop a model for performing the proper functions of the state library in various different situations, and that it might provide expert witnesses before state legislative bodies. It was thought within the realm of possibility to achieve great improvement in the weak state library structure in a fairly short time. Mrs. Moore asked that the staff provide the members with an issue of the ALA magazine which has articles on the problem of state library standards and state library services. Included were articles by Eleanor Ferguson and John Humphrey.

An ALA bibliography of standards for libraries also was mentioned as useful for the Commission members to know about.

Commission members felt they were in need of much information in order to get on with their task. Mentioned as desiderata were:

- 1) A roster of all libraries in the government (which the Federal Library Committee was said to have compiled).
- 2) Information about pending legislation that affects libraries and information science.
- 3) Data on the federal budgets for federal libraries, for other library support, and for research and development.
- 4) A survey of scientific and technical information programs--which Colonel Aines said he would provide to members of the Commission as soon as it is ready.

This led to discussion of what the Commission's main task is and how it is to tackle it. Mr. Kemeny said, "It seems to me that we keep talking procedural issues, questions of budget, legislation, what agencies we might work with, and I at least am confused in my mind as to what sort of substantive work this Commission might be doing."

Looking at the legislation establishing the Commission, its members agreed that--broadly stated--it is to develop overall plans for meeting the library and information needs of the country; that it will deal with all kinds of libraries and with information facilities that are not libraries; and that it must concern itself with state and local levels, as well as with federal programs. It was said that the consumer of information is the Commission's constituency, but the members were not clear or agreed on whether the consumer or the apparatus should be its main focus.

The Chairman thought it best for the Commission to start by making up an agenda of problems--perhaps not the whole array of all the important problems there are--but some matters the Commission members can agree are important enough to be worked on. To this Mr. Lorenz replied that there first ought to be an inventory of what is already done or under way. Though Mr. Becker thought it impractical to consider the preparation of a complete inventory, he said that some basic data could be assembled which would give the Commission a common base from which to work. Mr. Cuadra said it might help the Commission to think in terms of trying to plan a system--but to do that he thought the first order of business had to be some agreement on what is needed. The next step would be to decide how to do it.

Miss Scott noted that the Commission's attention had already been drawn to some needs. There had been discussion of the problems of state library agencies, and a letter had been received from the Association of State Libraries urging that the Commission give attention to serious problems that could arise if the anticipated rapid growth of interstate and intrastate

networks takes place without national attention to standardization of equipment and coordination of network planning. There was agreement that this is a matter for the Commission's deliberation and discussion. Also, there was affirmative response to Mr. Lorenz's query whether the Commission has a role to play in encouraging libraries to use uniform standards and uniform hardware and software. Various duplications of effort--in acquisition, in storage, in rarely used resources, etc.--were thought, too, to be proper concerns of the Commission.

The Chairman told the Commission that it will be necessary to submit a budget for fiscal year 1973 by October 1, 1971, and, he said, if a substantial sum is to be received, the Office of Management and Budget will have to be convinced that the Commission knows what it wants to do with the money. It thus will have to say what it thinks is worth doing without much inventorying or research--important as that is.

Mr. Zipf thought it logical that the Commission should first define its problems and decide what it should do, and then worry about whether it had enough money--but he and the others agreed that a committee of Commission members should be asked to prepare a list of classes of activities in which it expects to engage, to be used in the budget request. Messrs. Cuadra, Aines, Becker, and Dunlap were asked to compose this committee and to report to the Commission on the following day. It was agreed that the full amount authorized for fiscal year 1973, i.e., \$750,000., should be requested.

An off-the-record discussion of the appointment of an Executive Director for the Commission followed.

The September 21 meeting began with a review of the Justification of Appropriation Estimates for fiscal year 1972, which the Chairman had submitted, and which had been the basis for the \$200,000 appropriation received for the current year. It called for five employees: Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, Administrative Officer, and two secretaries. It was agreed that, for 1973, funds for three additional employees--two research assistants and a clerk-typist--should be requested. Also, it was agreed that funds for the expenses of eight Commission meetings should be requested, and that some of the meetings should be held away from Washington. It was thought desirable symbolically that the Commission's office space be separate from HEW.

Members of the Commission were asked to contribute to a roster of persons who might serve the Commission as consultants--indicating the subjects on which they are expert. The Chairman said that it would be useful also to have the names of consulting firms.

The Commission was told that the American Council of Learned Societies has a Committee on Research Libraries which is ready to render any assistance it can to the Commission.

The committee that had been appointed the previous day made its report on classes of activity in which the Commission might engage, and the list the committee had prepared is attached to these minutes as Attachment 1. Mr. Cuadra, who presented the report, explained that the list is based on three functions as set forth in the legislation that established the Commission:

- 1) Conduct studies, surveys, and analyses of library and information needs . . .
- 2) Appraise the adequacies and deficiencies of current library and information resources and services . . .
- 3) Develop overall plans for meeting national library and informational needs . . .

One matter referred to in the report about which there was considerable discussion was consortia and cooperative arrangements, and it was said that major progress in the short run might be possible in this area. Mr. Becker said that the proceedings of the Airlie House conference on networking are to be out soon and that they will contain a great deal of information in this field.

Discussion reverted to the proper role of the Commission. Messrs. Cuadra and Kemeny said they felt its role is contained in parts 1 and 2 of the chart (see Attachment 1), and making recommendations on 3.

With respect to regional meetings, it was suggested that they could serve several purposes:

- 1) Report on progress and plans of the Commission.
- 2) Present recommendations from the Commission to the people of the region.
- 3) Get reactions from the people on the Commission's plans and recommendations.
- 4) Presentations by the participants.

Several unrelated matters were discussed:

The Commission members spoke of their interest in reports that will appear from time to time on subjects with which they are concerned. They asked that the most important of these be abstracted for them by the

professional staff, since they felt they would not have time to read all of the material with which they ought to be familiar.

With respect to library manpower, it was noted that the predictions made four or five years ago of insatiable demand for librarians have not been borne out. In many places now there are more librarians than jobs.

It was felt that the Commission should take an interest in the curriculum of graduate schools that are training people as librarians and information scientists.

The pricing policy of government agencies that sell tapes, which varies widely from agency to agency, was mentioned as an appropriate area of concern for the Commission.

Mr. Velde urged that the Commission interest itself in teaching people who are appointed or elected library trustees what their offices mean and what their opportunities are.

Mrs. Moore spoke about the importance of the trustees of state library boards; but Mr. Lerner noted that in some situations urban libraries do not want to operate under state boards, or get their funding through the state.

There was mention of a letter members of the Commission had received from the Wilson Library Journal and agreement that the Chairman's reply had been correct. Mr. Burkhardt's letter said it was too early to provide answers to the questions that had been asked and also expressed the conviction that a commission should work as a body--not as a congeries of individual views.

The Chairman asked whether the Commission wished its sessions to be open, and whether it would welcome the regular attendance of organization representatives, etc., who might want to come. It was felt that the Commission would want to invite some representatives to come to specific meetings to provide information and discuss needs, and that it would be receptive to organizations that wanted to be heard, but that generally the meetings should not be open. The American Library Association, the Association of Research Libraries, the Office of Education, the Council on Library Resources, and others were to be asked to make presentations at early meetings.

Thanks were expressed to the Library of Congress for the use of the Wilson Room for the meeting and for the luncheon at which the Commission members had been its guests.

Dates for the next meetings were set: November 15-16
December 9-10.

1. Studies, surveys, and analyses of information needs and means to meet them.

Definition of information "rights" (individual/societal)

1975 information needs and resources

Social implications of library change/effect of social change on libraries (extended roles)

Promotion of self education in libraries (the library/information center as an educational institution--for the open college, adult education, etc.)

Means:

Accomplishment of federal aid

1975 technology/new media (film, video, digital, fiche, on line)

New concepts of operation, e.g. public/school library integration
consortia
net working
federation
system service center
centralized cataloguing
remote access

Bibliographic standards

Generating financial support (other than federal)

2. Appraise adequacies/deficiencies of services/programs

(see "means", above)

Evaluate U.S. "libraries" in relation to standards/rights

3. Develop over-all plans

(various kinds of technical support)

(fed in from #1 and #2)

The regional planning meetings.

Define requirements	Design	Develop	Operate
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Commission role stops here